

1 J. MITCHELL COBEAGA, ESQ.  
2 Nevada Bar No. 0177  
3 THE COBEAGA LAW FIRM  
4 550 East Charleston Blvd. Suite D  
5 Las Vegas, Nevada 89104  
6 Telephone: (702) 240-2499  
7 Facsimile: (702) 240-2489  
8 *Attorneys for Defendant*

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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
**DISTRICT OF NEVADA**

SUSIE LEAHY, individually and SUSIE )  
LEAHY AS GUARDIAN AD LITEM FOR )  
REBECCA SUSAN LEAHY, a minor, )  
HANNAH JOY LEAHY, a minor, and )  
WILLIAM JOHN LEAHY, III, a minor, ) CASE NO: 2:10-CV-00082 -GMN-PAL  
Plaintiffs, )  
vs. )  
LONE MOUNTAIN AVIATION, INC., a )  
corporation; and DOES 1 through 20, )  
inclusive, )  
Defendants )  
DEFENDANT LONE MOUNTAIN  
AVIATION, INC.'S OPPOSITION TO  
PLAINTIFFS' MOTION IN LIMINE NO. 4  
TO PRECLUDE ANY REFERENCE TO  
PLAINTIFF SUSIE LEAHY'S  
REMARRIAGE

COMES NOW, Defendant LONE MOUNTAIN AVIATION, INC., by and through its  
counsel of record, J. MITCHELL COBEAGA, ESQ. of the law firm, THE COBEAGA LAW  
FIRM, hereby submits its Opposition to Plaintiffs' Motion in Limine No. 4 to Preclude Any  
Reference to Plaintiff Susie Leahy's Remarriage. In support of this Opposition, Defendant  
submits the following:

**MEMORANDUM OF POINTS AND AUTHORITIES**

Defendant LONE MOUNTAIN brings the instant Opposition to Plaintiff's Motion,  
pursuant to FRE 401-403, seeking a determination from the Court regarding the admissibility of  
Plaintiff LEAHY-HERR's remarriage and name change where she is seeking to prove damages  
arising out of loss of support, companionship, etc. The substantive right to damages for this  
wrongful death action arises statutorily under NRS 41.085(4), which states that decedent may be  
awarded pecuniary damages for "grief or sorrow, loss of probable support, companionship,

1 society, comfort and consortium..."

2 **I.**

3 **LEGAL ARGUMENT**

4 **I. Compensatory damages are not meant to punish, so any perceived benefit to  
Lone Mountain of Mrs. Leahy-Herr's remarriage is irrelevant.**

5 Defendant incorporates by reference the points and authorities found in support of its  
6 Motion in Limine To Introduce Evidence of Plaintiff Leahy's Remarriage (Document No. 71).

7 In her Motion to Preclude Evidence of Remarriage, Plaintiff argues that evidence of  
8 remarriage should be precluded because "[i]t would ... permit a tortfeasor to profit by an actual  
9 remarriage of the widow." However, the Restatement (Second) of Torts plainly states:

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11  
12 In determining the measure of compensation, indemnity or  
13 restitution, the law of torts ordinarily does not measure its  
14 recovery as do the rules based upon unjust enrichment, on  
the benefit received by the defendant. This first purpose of  
tort law leads to compensatory damages.

15 Rest. (Second) of Torts §901, cmt a.

16 The Nevada Courts generally follow the Restatement (Second) of Torts. *Gen. Motors*  
17 *corp. v. Eighth Judicial Dist. Court of State of Nev. ex rel. County of Clark*, 122 Nev. 466, 468,  
18 134 P.3d 111, 113 (2006); *Allison v. Merck & Co., Inc.*, 110 Nev. 762769-70, 878 P.2d 948,  
19 953-54 (1994); *Wyeth v. Rowatt*, 244 P.3d 765, 775-76 (Nev. 2010); *Butler ex rel. Biller v.*  
20 *Bayer*, 123 Nev. 450, 454, 168 P.3d 1055, 1059 (2007); *Nittinger v. Holman*, 119 Nev. 192, 195,  
21 69 P.3d 688, 690 (2003); *Fink v. Oshins*, 118 Nev. 428, 433, 49 P.3d 640, 644 (2002). It is  
22 therefore appropriate to look to the Restatements for guidance when Plaintiff seeks to offer  
23 evidence of her lack of support following the death of her spouse.

24 The Restatement plainly describes how compensatory damages for pecuniary harm are  
25 calculated. A Court measures pecuniary damages "(a) before the tort, and (b) as they appear at  
26 the time of trial." Rest. (Second) of Torts § 906, cmt. a. It follows that evidence of Plaintiff's  
27 support from a spouse at time of trial is relevant to the computation of damages.

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1 It is well established that “in tort law, the purpose of compensatory damages is to make  
 2 the plaintiff whole by putting him in the same position as if the tort had not occurred.” 59 U.  
 3 Kan. Law. Rev. 231. This basic principle of damages has been proclaimed by the Supreme  
 4 Court for well over a century. “As a general rule, the object of the law in awarding damages for  
 5 civil injury ... is to put the plaintiff in the same position ... as he would have been had there been  
 6 no injury...” *Milwaukee & St. P.R. Co. V. Arms*, 91 U.S. 489 (1875). See also *Birdsall v.*  
 7 *Coolidge*, 93 U.S. 64 (1876) (“Compensatory damages and actual damages mean the same  
 8 thing.”); *Conn. Railway and Lighting Co. v. Palmer*, 59 S.Ct.316, 323 (1936) (“The damages  
 9 recovered by an injured party have always been limited to his ‘actual’ damages.”)

10 As regards Plaintiff’s support from a spouse, Plaintiff is now in a similar position “as if  
 11 the tort had not occurred.” Accordingly, her actual damages as regards loss of support should be  
 12 limited to the time she remained unmarried. Otherwise, Plaintiff and her new husband would be  
 13 in a better position, rather than a similar position, than if the tort had not occurred.

14       **II. Defendant has accomplished sufficient discovery relating to Plaintiff’s  
 15 remarriage through her deposition on January 19, 2012.**

16 In her Motion to Preclude Evidence of Remarriage, Plaintiff states “No discovery has  
 17 been accomplished by Lone Mountain Aviation, Inc., relating to any of the background facts as  
 18 to Plaintiff’s remarriage.” This statement overlooks the deposition of Mrs. Leahy-Herr on  
 19 January 19, 2012, in which she testified regarding the background facts of her new marriage and  
 20 change of employment status as follows:

- 21       A. At the time of the accident, I was employed with Veritas Christian Academy, but  
 22 I had just been employed, just started the job.
- 23       Q. And you left that job right after, you didn’t stay there; correct?
- 24       A. No, I stayed there for two years, to support myself and the kids once he died. I  
 25 had no means otherwise.
- 26       Q. Did you stop work - - would that be at or around the time you got remarried you  
 27 stopped working?
- 28       A. Correct.

(Deposition of Susan Leahy-Herr, P. 70 attached hereto as Exhibit A)

1           Mrs. Leahy-Herr provided testimony regarding her remarriage multiple times throughout  
 2 the deposition. Accordingly, a material issue of fact exists as to actual damages for loss of  
 3 support. Lone Mountain should be allowed to pursue this line of questioning during cross  
 4 examination.

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6           **III. Evidence of Remarriage should be admitted to impeach misimpressions  
 created by the plaintiff.**

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8           Even if the jury were instructed that remarriage would not mitigate damages of loss of  
 9 support, evidence of remarriage should still be allowed to correct misimpressions created by the  
 10 Plaintiff. *See Elmahdi v. Ethridge*, 987 S.W.2d 366, 369 (Mo.App.1999) (“a defendant may  
 11 mention the fact of the plaintiff’s remarriage, although not the details about the new spouse’s  
 12 income or services, if necessary in order to correct a misimpression created by the Plaintiff.”).  
 13 This is particularly true when, as here, the surviving spouse has changed her name as a result of  
 14 the remarriage and quit her job to become a full-time homemaker. Withholding evidence of a  
 15 remarriage from the jury “would not be consistent with the high standards of integrity which the  
 16 judicial process should maintain.” *Glick v. Allstate Ins. Co.*, 435 W.2d 17 (Mo. Ct. App. 1968);  
 17 *see also, Harbenski v. Upper Peninsula Power Co.*, 325 N.W.2d 785 (Mich. Ct. App. 1982);  
 18 *Dubil v. Labate*, 245 A.2d 177, 180 (N.J. 1968) (“[i]t would be offensive to the integrity of the  
 19 judicial process if the plaintiff, after taking an oath to be truthful, were permitted to misrepresent  
 20 her marital status to the jury”); and *Smyer v. Gaines*, 332 So. 2d 655 (Fla. App. 1976) (evidence  
 21 of remarriage allowed to show the whole truth). Even if such evidence were not permitted  
 22 during *voir dire* or opening statements, evidence of Mrs. Leahy-Herr’s subsequent remarriage  
 23 should be admitted to correct any affirmative misrepresentations by Plaintiff. If Mrs. Leahy-Herr  
 24 were to misrepresent her name, amount of children, or that she is a single mother struggling to  
 25 support her family, evidence of her remarriage should be admitted to prevent a fraud on the jury.  
 26 Allowing Mrs. Leahy-Herr to conceal evidence and use her former name would equate to  
 27 perjury. *See, Watson v. Fishback*, 301 N.E.2d 303 (Ill. 1973).

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III.

## CONCLUSION

This Court should follow the principles established by the Restatement (Second) of Torts and the foregoing cases to allow the introduction of evidence of Mrs. Leahy-Herr's remarriage to Brian Herr. The integrity of the Court would be jeopardized by allowing the Plaintiff to offer evidence of her pecuniary loss of support or that she is currently "unemployed" rather than a married housewife. Furthermore, the jury should be introduced to all relevant evidence of damages. If Plaintiff Susan Leahy-Herr is to be awarded damages for loss of support, society and comfort, the jury should be able to make a determination as to what those damages were and what future damages are likely to be, not what they could have potentially been.

DATED this 15<sup>TH</sup> day of March, 2013.

THE COBEAGA LAW FIRM

/s/ J. Mitchell Cobeaga  
J. MITCHELL COBEAGA, ESQ.  
Nevada Bar No. 0177  
550 E. Charleston Blvd., Suite D  
Las Vegas, NV 89104  
Attorney for Defendant

ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS AT LAW  
550 East Charleston Blvd., Suite D  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this 15<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2013, I caused to be served a true and correct copy of the foregoing Defendants' Opposition to Plaintiffs' Motion in Limine No. 4 to Preclude Any Reference To Plaintiff Susie Leahy's Remarriage by electronic service (via Case Management/Electronic Case Filing). Notice of this filing will be sent to all parties by operation of the Court's electronic filing system.

Patrick E. Bailey, Esq.  
Keith A. LOVENDOSKY, Esq.  
**BAILEY & PARTNERS**  
2800 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200  
Santa Monica, CA 90404-6203  
Fax: (310) 392-8091

James L. Pocrass, Esq.  
JAMES L. POCRASS LAW CORPORATION  
1875 Park East, Suite 1750  
Los Angeles, CA 90067  
Fax: (310) 550-9051

Jim Oronoz, Esq.  
LAW OFFICE OF JIM ORONOZ  
815 S. Casino Center Blvd.  
Las Vegas, NV 89101  
Fax: (702) 474-1320

/s/ Dawn Derosa

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## An Employee of The Cobeaga Law Firm

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